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UNCLAS KINSHASA 008416

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL CG

SUBJECT: GDRC RELEASES MORE PRISONERS FROM MAKALA

REF: A. KINSHASA 8108

B. KINSHASA 8224

¶1. PROSECUTOR GENERAL LUHONGE KABINDA RELEASED 170 PRISONERS FROM MAKALA CENTRAL PRISON ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16. ALTHOUGH SOME WERE CIVILIANS, MOST OF THOSE RELEASED WERE REPORTEDLY POLICEMEN WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF MALFEASANCE. LUHONGE PROMISED THE RELEASE, LATER THIS WEEK, OF SOME SOLDIERS WHO REMAIN BEHIND BARS. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT FIRST THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE TO IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE LOCATION FOR THEIR "RE-INTEGRATION."

¶2. THESE LATEST 170 FOLLOW CLOSELY ON THE 509 PRISONERS FREED EARLIER THIS MONTH (REF A), AND THE POLITICAL PRISONERS LIBERATED A FEW DAYS LATER (REF B). ALTHOUGH AUTHORITIES HAVE PROVIDED NO OFFICIAL EXPLANATION FOR THIS LATEST RELEASE, MOST KINSHASA RESIDENTS CHALK IT UP TO "PRESIDENTIAL BENEVOLENCE" DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON. THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL CLAIMED TO HAVE RELEASED THE 509 PRISONERS IN COMMEMORATION OF KABILA'S BIRTHDAY.

SWING